women news

Published to promote the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

No. 2, 1991

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Status of ratification of the Convention

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1979 and entered into force in September 1981. In becoming parties to the Convention, States commit themselves to adapt their legislation, customs and practices to promote and protect women's equality and rights. Under the terms of the Convention, they are required to report within one year of ratification and thereafter at least every four years to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on measures they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention.

Since the last update on the status of ratifications of the Convention (*Women News* No. 39, October 1990), Malta has ratified. However, through the accession of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany, both of them States parties, the number of States parties to the Convention as of 9 April 1991 is still 104.

Since 1983, when it began the consideration of country reports, the Committee has reviewed 60 initial reports, 18 second periodic reports and 2 third periodic reports of States parties.

Members of the Committee in 1991

Charlotte Abaka (Ghana)
Ryoko Akamatsu (Japan)
Ana Maria Alfonsin de Fasan (Argentina)
Emna Aouij (Tunisia)
Desirée P. Bernard (Guyana)
Dora Gladys Nancy Bravo Nuñez de Ramsey (Ecuador)
Carlota Bustelo García del Real (Spain)
Ivanka Corti (Italy)
Elizabeth Evatt (Australia)
Grethe Fenger-Möller (Denmark)
Norma Monica Forde (Barbados)
Aida Gonzalez Martinez (Mexico)
Zagorka Ilic (Yugoslavia)
Chryssanthi Laiou-Antoniou (Greece)
Tatiana Nikolaeva (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Edith Oeser (Germany)
Teresita Quintos-Deles (Philippines)
Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling (Germany)
Lin Shangzhen (China)*
Kongit Sinegiorgis (Ethiopia)
Mervat Tallawy (Egypt)
Rose N. Ukeje (Nigeria)
Kissem Walla-Tchangai (Togo)

* Unable to attend owing to illness

Tenth session of the Committee

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its tenth session at Vienna from 21 January to 1 February 1991. Established under article 17 of the Convention, the Committee of 23 experts meets annually to review country reports from States parties to the Convention. Besides the 22 experts (one could not attend because of illness) and 4 advisers, representatives of 10 States parties participated in the session, which was also attended by observers from 23 other Governments, 1 other observer, 1 intergovernmental organization, 1 body and 3 specialized agencies of the United Nations, 16 non-governmental organizations and 2 women's groups as well as 3 individual observers.

Chaired by Mervat Tallawy (Egypt), the Committee considered the initial reports of Burkina Faso and Italy and the second periodic reports of Austria, Denmark, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda and Yugoslavia. A pre-session working group met from 14 to 18 January to prepare lists of issues and questions relating to the second peri-

odic reports to be reviewed by the Committee. In the case of Poland and Portugal, for which third periodic reports had been submitted, both the second and third reports were considered together.

Under an agenda item on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, the experts decided that States parties whose reports had been overdue at the tenth session could submit a combined report to the Committee. In cases where the initial report was due, it was decided that the combined report should be comprehensive and cover all aspects of the Convention, as well as the general recommendations of the Committee. Furthermore, the report should describe the current situation of women and seek to show the changes that had occurred since the Convention had entered into force in the country concerned, as well as the obstacles encountered in its implementation. The Committee encouraged States parties whose reports were overdue to submit them.

In addition to reviewing country reports, the Committee adopted three general recommendations. General recommendation 16 (X) on unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises recommends that States parties: (a) include in their reports information on the legal and social situation of unpaid women in family enterprises; (b) collect statistical data on women who work without payment, social security and social benefits in enterprises owned by a family member, and include these data in their reports; and (c) take the necessary steps to guarantee payment, social security and social benefits for women who work without such benefits in enterprises owned by a family member.

General recommendation 17 (X) relates to the measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the gross national product. In it, the Committee recommends that States parties: (a) encourage and support research and experimental studies to measure and value the unremunerated domestic activities of women; for example, by conducting time-use surveys as part of their national household survey programmes and by collecting statistics disaggregated by gender on time spent on activities both in the household and in the labour market; (b) take steps, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, to quantify and include the unremunerated domestic activities of women in the gross national product; and

(c) include in their reports information on the research and experimental studies undertaken to measure and value unremunerated domestic activities, as well as on the progress made in the incorporation of the unremunerated domestic activities of women in national accounts.

In general recommendation 18 (X) on disabled women, the Committee recommends that States parties should provide in-

formation on disabled women in their periodic reports, and on measures taken to deal with their particular situation, including special measures to ensure that they have equal access to education and employment, health services, social security and to ensure that they can participate in all areas of social and cultural life.

The Committee agreed that its eleventh session should be convened in New York from 20 to 31 January 1992. Subject to the agreement of the Governments concerned, the Committee proposed that the initial report of Romania and the initial and second periodic reports of Honduras and Yemen should be reviewed as well as the second periodic reports of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Spain, Sri Lanka and Venezuela. A reserve list was established. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that draft general recommendations on development aid and women's role in development; teacher training on equality issues; and women workers in enterprises would be considered at that session, with priority being given to the recommendation on development aid and women's role in development. The Committee's contributions to the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 and the world conference on women in 1995 will also be considered at its eleventh session.

Seminars

Tokyo

A regional seminar on the Convention was held at Tokyo from 10 to 14 December 1990 at the invitation of the Government of Japan. Organized by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and designed as a training seminar for senior officials of national machinery for the advancement of women, it was attended by participants from Bangladesh,* Bhutan,** China,** Cyprus,* Indonesia,** Lao People's Democratic Republic,** Pakistan,*** Philippines,** Republic of Korea,** Sri Lanka,** Thailand* and Viet Nam.** The aim of the seminar was to impart to the participants the knowledge required: to establish or improve national machinery; to undertake measures to accelerate the implementation of the Convention; and to prepare reports under article 18 of the Convention.

Following the opening of the seminar and an address by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, the participants familiarized themselves with: the substantive articles of the Convention; the general guidelines regarding the form and contents of reports; and the general recommendations of the Committee. The participants then discussed in small working groups the extent to which the requirements of the Convention were being met in their countries, the obstacles that remained and the strategies to be adopted in order to overcome the obstacles. In most countries, traditional customs and practices presented the major obstacles to equality. They also discussed their experiences in preparing national reports; the role that non-governmental organizations played in that process; and the role of national machinery in collecting data, preparing country reports and following up on actions taken.

* Acceded to the Convention.
** Ratified the Convention.
*** Not yet signed or ratified the Convention.

INVITATION TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS*

"The potential of non-governmental organizations to collaborate with the Committee was stressed. Means of involving non-governmental organizations, especially from developing countries, given the resource constraints, were discussed. The role of international non-governmental organizations in facilitating such an involvement was noted and the work of the International Women's Rights Action Watch to encourage the development of national non-governmental organizations in developing countries was cited. ***The Committee requested the Secretariat to include in its publications*** **Women 2000** ***and*** **Women News** ***an invitation to non-governmental organizations to provide members of the Committee with information for their use*** *and requested the Secretariat to send information thus received to Committee members."*

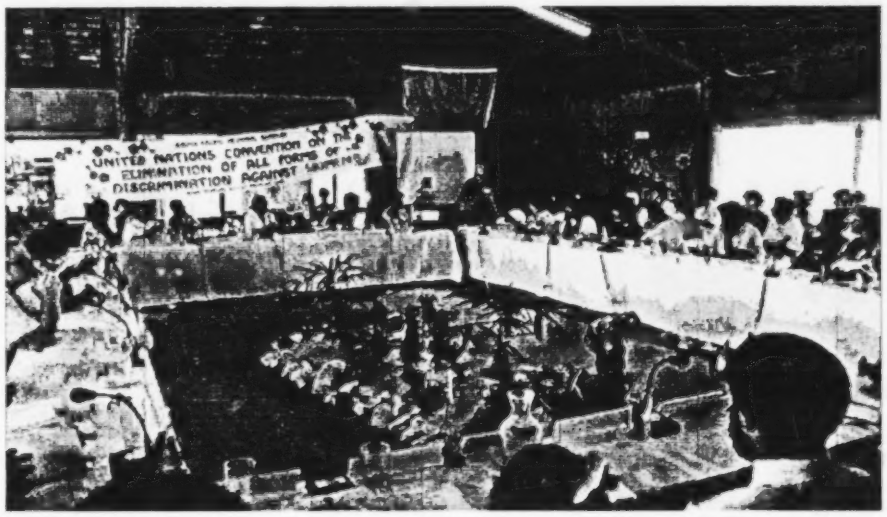
(Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its tenth session, chap. V, sect. 8.)

* See page 4.

READEX FICHE

Rarotonga

A subregional seminar for the South Pacific on the Convention was held at Rarotonga, Cook Islands, from 18 to 21 March. Organized jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Governments of Australia, the Cook Islands and New Zealand, the seminar covered the following issues: the history and objectives of the Convention; the situation regarding discrimination against women in the Pacific; the importance of ratifying the Convention; the steps involved in becoming a State party and establishing an implementation mechanism; and conclusions. Details of the proceedings of the seminar will be given in a future issue of *Women News* .



Information required

Article 18 of the Convention requires States parties to report periodically on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and on the progress made in this respect and also states that these reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the Convention.

The general guidelines regarding the form and contents of reports received from States parties under article 18 of the Convention (CEDAW/C/7), adopted in 1983, delineate the type of information that should be included in the reports. This includes in the first part of the report: the actual, general, social, economic, political and legal framework of the country and the effects that ratification of the Convention has had thereon; institutions or authorities to ensure the principle of equality; the means used to promote and ensure the full development and advancement of women; and means of enforcement of the provisions of the Convention. The second part of the report should provide specific information in relation to each provision of the Convention: the constitutional, legislative and administrative provisions or other measures in force; the developments that have taken place and the programmes and institutions that have been established; any restrictions or limitations imposed by law or practice; any other factors or difficulties affecting the exercise and enjoyment of each right; and any other information on progress made in the fulfilment of each right. The guidelines also recommend that the reports should include information indicating how legal instruments are reflected in the actual, economic, political and social realities and general conditions existing in the countries and that data should also be supplied, disaggregated according to gender.

Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Contents may be freely reproduced.
ISSN No. 1010-8904

women news

Published to promote the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

No. 3, 1991

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ADOPTS SUBSTANTIVE RESOLUTIONS

At its thirty-fifth session, held at Vienna from 27 February to 8 March 1991, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted by consensus seven resolutions calling for action by the international community. The Commission also took two decisions and recommended a total of seven draft resolutions to the Economic and Social Council for its adoption. In addition to the 45 members of the Commission, the session was attended by observers for 33 States Members of the United Nations, 3 non-Member States, 6 specialized agencies, 4 intergovernmental organizations, 1 liberation movement, 1 observer, and 37 non-governmental organizations.

Under its agenda, the Commission discussed programming and coordination matters related to the United Nations system; monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, 1/ including preparations for the 1995 world conference on women; and the three priority themes. The themes were: Equality: vulnerable women, including migrant women; Development: national, regional and international machinery for the effective integration of women into the development process, including non-governmental organizations; and Peace: refugee and displaced women and children.

Coordination

Under the agenda item on programming and coordination matters related to the United Nations and the United Nations system, the topics under discussion were the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for women and development, the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, the future of the Trust Fund for the Monitoring and Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the proposed programme of work of the Division for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, for the biennium 1992-1993.

Members of the Commission, 1991

	Term expires		*Term expires*
Austria	1992	Lesotho	1991
Bahamas	1993	Malaysia	1993
Bangladesh	1994	Mexico	1994
Brazil	1992	Morocco	1992
Bulgaria	1994	Netherlands	1994
Burkina Faso	1991	Nigeria	1993
Canada	1992	Pakistan	1991
China	1991	Philippines	1994
Colombia	1992	Poland	1992
Costa Rica	1991	Rwanda	1994
Côte d'Ivoire	1994	Sudan	1992
Cuba	1991	Sweden	1991
Cyprus	1993	Thailand	1992
Ecuador	1993	Turkey	1991
Egypt	1993	Uganda	1993
France	1992	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic	1991
Ghana	1993	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	1994
Guatemala	1991	United Republic of Tanzania	1992
India	1993	United States of America	1994
Indonesia	1993	Zaire	1994
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1993	Zimbabwe	1993
Italy	1994		
Jamaica	1993		
Japan	1992		

1/ *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

In a resolution on programme and planning matters, the Commission endorsed the proposed work programme of the Division for the Advancement of Women for the biennium 1992-1993 and recommended that the strengthening of substantive and technical support to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, preparations for the 1995 world conference and support for establishing and strengthening national machinery for the advancement of women should be accorded priority. It also recommended that the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Economic and Social Council, in reviewing the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for women and development, should examine particularly those organizations whose resources for the advancement of women had seemed to have decreased. Furthermore, it recommended that the Secretary-General should analyse the evolution of resources available to the programme on the advancement of women, examine the efficiency of the programme and suggest means of providing improved support to the Commission and the Committee and to development activities in priority areas.

Monitoring the Forward-looking Strategies

Concerned at the delay in implementing the Forward-looking Strategies and that in some countries the lack of appropriate resources was an obstacle to the realization of necessary development programmes for the advancement of women, the Commission adopted a resolution urging the international community to continue providing financial and technical assistance to specific development programmes for the advancement of women. It also called upon international organizations to take specific measures to reinforce national efforts directed at improving the legal and social status of women and to identify new forms of cooperation.

Reaffirming the essential relationship between the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies, the Commission recommended that the Economic and Social Council should endorse general recommendations 16 (X), 17 (X) and 18 (X), adopted by the Committee at its tenth session (see *Women News* No. 2, 1991), and called upon all States parties to the Convention to draw the attention of all States that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to the benefits of doing so. In the same resolution, the Commission urged States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide training opportunities on a regular basis for persons preparing periodic reports of States parties to the Convention and also urged the Secretary-General to strengthen the provision of training in the implementation of the Convention at the national, regional and interregional levels especially in assisting States parties to meet their reporting obligations.

Extensive support emerged in favour of the world conference on women to be held in 1995, with many representatives seeing it as an opportunity of giving new impetus to the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies. The Commission decided that the title of the conference should be "Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace" and that for promotion at the national level, additional formulations could be used such as: "Remove the Obstacles Now", "Women: Half the World - Half the Power", "Women: Mobilizing for Power - Acting for Change" or "Social Justice for Women". However, the Division for the Advancement of Women should be informed of the results of the national use of additional formulations for inclusion in reports on preparations for the conference. The Commission adopted a resolution on the preparations for the world conference in which it decided to prepare for consideration by the conference a programme of action comprising a limited number of issues that had been identified as representing a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of the majority of women. It requested the bodies, regional commissions, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations as well as the non-governmental organizations concerned to contribute to the preparations for the conference and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its thirty-sixth session (1992) on such contributions. The decision on the venue of the world conference was postponed until the thirty-sixth session.

Priority themes

Equality

The discussion under the theme of equality dealt with young, elderly, disabled and migrant women as well as women heads of household, as women in these categories had been identified as being vulnerable in that they were at risk of suffering from double discrimination. It was emphasized, however, that the term "vulnerable" should in no way imply victimization, passivity, powerlessness and guilt. Representatives said that measures undertaken for the benefit of such women should aim at improving their living conditions with the purpose of their full integration into society, for which strong political will was necessary as well as education and training.

In a resolution on women migrant workers, the Commission invited Member States to sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990, and encouraged them to establish or strengthen appropriate services dealing with questions on the international migration of workers and their families. The relevant organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other associations for migrants were requested to undertake activities for the purpose of raising awareness on the problems of women migrant workers and to assist in disseminating among migrant women themselves information on their legal, social and economic rights and obligations. The Commission further requested national machineries to invite non-governmental organizations of migrant women to contribute to the planning process for policies and programmes affecting them.

Women and the prevention and control of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was the subject of another resolution, which recognized the important role of women, women's organizations, non-governmental organizations and international agencies in the prevention of the transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and in caring for persons suffering from AIDS. It called upon the United Nations system to ensure that sufficient resources were allocated in progammes and activities for the control of AIDS to the aspects of the epidemic that concerned women, particularly in developing countries. The resolution also invited Member States, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system concerned to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Women and HIV/AIDS and the Role of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women (see *Women News* No. 40, November 1990).

Development

Representatives described the structure and successes of their national machinery as well as the problems being encountered, which were generally the lack of human and financial resources to enable it to function efficiently. It was pointed out that international aid was frequently indispensable but that the machinery, because of its inherent weakness, had difficulty in negotiating aid under satisfactory terms. The importance of regional and international machinery in backing up national efforts, especially in the exchange of information, training of personnel and financial assistance, was highlighted.

The resolution that was adopted on women and development called upon Governments, international financial and other relevant institutions, and non-governmental organizations to promote measures to stimulate the economies of developing countries and to provide financial services on the basis of equal opportunity for women and men. It urged Governments to adopt policies to promote economic development that would ensure the full and explicit integration of women's concerns. Furthermore, it requested Member States to make provision for specific training programmes for women in rural and urban areas aimed at developing their technical and management skills and called upon Governments, donor countries and the relevant international agencies to take further coordinated measures to facilitate the access of women, particularly rural and urban poor women, to basic education, health and child-care facilities.

Peace

In recognizing the particular vulnerability of refugee and displaced women and children, emphasis was put on the need for long-term solutions that dealt with the root of the refugee problem,

thus preventing the flow of refugees and making repatriation or reintegration possible. Development was considered a precondition for a solution to the refugee problem as was the increased participation by women in the definition and implementation of refugee policies at all levels. Numerous representatives of countries receiving refugees, of specialized agencies of the United Nations system and of non-governmental organizations reported on programmes for refugee and displaced women and children.

Meeting of non-governmental organizations

The session was preceded by a one-day meeting of non-governmental organizations, which was designed to plan activities leading up to the 1995 world conference. By way of example, the meeting was briefed on the preparations that had been undertaken prior to the NGO Forum held at Nairobi in 1985. Six topics were discussed in separate workshops: programme, theme and focus of the 1995 meeting; specific organizational arrangements for the 1995 meeting; linkages to the United Nations; organization of meetings up to 1995: local, national and regional; fund-raising, budget and plan of action; media and public relations. A few of the recommendations and ideas that emerged from the meeting were as follows:

- The value of a questionnaire to formulate the programme of the meeting was stressed as was the focus on formulating a basic message at an early stage that would help to reach out to different parts of the world, regional forums and national planning events;

- Participants should be aware that 1995 was also the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations;

- International organizations should communicate with their national and local affiliates during the preparatory process so that grass-root members would also be linked to the planning of the world conference;

- Where national machinery existed, non-governmental organizations should join together and use it to communicate grass-root concerns to Governments. Where no such machinery existed, cooperating non-governmental organizations should try to set up some communication system with Governments using already established contacts;

- The importance of preparation for, and participation in, the regional preparatory meetings for the world conference was highlighted. International non-governmental organizations should encourage the involvement of their national organizations;

- Invitations should also be extended to government delegations to the world conference to attend the meeting of non-governmental organizations in 1995;

- Early contacts with the future host Government concerning the focus of the meeting of non-governmental organizations would help planning and facilitate cooperation. It was hoped that the world conference would be held in a place where it would be possible for everyone to attend the activities of non-governmental organizations and where such organizations could function effectively;

- Innovative means and modern technology such as satellite transmission should be employed to reach the women of the world;

- Involvement in other United Nations conferences was seen as an additional way of developing an awareness of the need to advance the status of women;

- An immediate consensus was reached that the advancement of women would be achieved through partnership between women and men, that true partnership was the logical result of equality, and that that concept would make a difference in 1995;

- It was suggested that the meeting of non-governmental organizations to be held in 1992 prior to the Commission should be for two days and an opportunity made for non-governmental organizations and government delegations to meet.

Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Contents may be freely reproduced
ISSN No. 1010-8904